

PROGRAM

Organ Preludes

Anonymous

Organ Estampies

Anonymous

L'Homme Armé

French Folk Song

Canon One

Guillaume Dufay

Canon Two

Josquin Des Prè

Canon Three

Pierre De La Rue

Pause

Dance for Organ

Andrew Violette

Organ Book*

Andrew Violette

Organum

Lento

Canons on L'Homme Armé

Finale

**premiere*



Andrew Violette

Composer, Organist

In Concert

Sunday, November 14, 1982 at 4 PM

Lutheran Church of Our Savior's Atonement

178 Bennett Avenue, New York, NY 10040

**169 ST WEST OF BROADWAY
TAKE A OR 1 TRAIN TO 19.**

ANDREW VIOLETTE was born 1953 in Brooklyn, NY. In 1975 he received his B.M. and M.M. in composition from the Juilliard School, where he studied with Roger Sessions, Elliott Carter and Otto Luening. A member of A.C.A., he has written over thirty works and has been commissioned by The Paul Sanasardo Dance Company, Battery Dance Company and Peggy Florin Dancers. This winter he will be in residence at the MacDowell Colony.

Piano Piece ©2, *Sonata* ©1 for two pianos, *Amor Dammi Quel Fazzolettino* and *Black Tea* are recorded on Opus One Records. As a pianist he has performed the works of Carmine Pepe, Max Schubel, Andrew Thomas, Roland Trogan, Lawrence Widdoes, Willard Roosevelt and Noah Crechevsky for the Opus One label.

Violette first composed works in 12-tone idioms. This led to a second style which he describes as "neomodism". Characterized by the use of rhythmic modes, static harmonies, canonic techniques, isorhythms as well as a pervasive tritonality, Violette has pioneered the practical aspects of this system since 1981.

Thanks to Josephine Pizzino and George Toro for their assistance with this program.

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Program notes are by their very nature deceptive. In music, that which most readily lends itself to verbal explanation — technical analysis, methodology, etc. — is often most easily remembered. What is lost is the music itself, which can only be experienced. Some people delight in puzzles, canons, systems and the like. Some people think they are overemphasized.

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Organ Preludes

These short preludes from the tablature of Adam Ileborgh (1448), Leonhard Kleber (1524), Hans Kotter (1520) and the *Buxheim Organ Book* (ca. 1470) represent the earliest idiomatic type of keyboard music.

Organ Estampies

Much like the waltz and the polka in the nineteenth century, the estampie and the ductia were popular in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The estampie has four to seven sections, the ductia has two to four. Each section is repeated with a different ending for each repetition. These pieces, from the *Robertsbridge Codex* (ca. 1325), are the earliest keyboard music that has survived. Hocket (an exchange of parts) and parallel fifths make this work particularly interesting.

Three Canons On L'Homme Armé

"L'Homme Armé: One must be on guard against the soldier. Everywhere it has been announced that everybody should arm himself with an iron hauberk."

(Benjamin Bart, Trans.)

Three canons by three composers form this set. All are based on *L'Homme Armé* (*The Armed Man*), a fifteenth century French folksong, very popular with composers as a cantus firmus. The word canon in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries did not have the same meaning as it has today, namely a composition in strict imitation. Such a piece in the fifteenth century was called a fuga (flight). Canon originally meant rule or direction according to which the second voice is derived. The canon by Guillaume Dufay (ca. 1400-1474) bears the latin inscription — Let the crab proceed full and return half — which means that the cantus firmus will be played twice, first in full note values, then halved and in retrograde motion. Since, however, a crab's motion is normally backwards, the proceeding section is retrograde and the returning section is normal. The canon by Josquin Des Prés (1450-1521) also bears a latin inscription — Three voices out of one — which means that the one part that's notated leads to three rhythmically different parts when read in the three different mensurations given at the beginning. This and the following canon by Pierre De La Rue (ca. 1460-1518) are called mensuration canons.

"A work in which there are theories is like an object which still has the ticket that shows its price."

(Proust)

Dance For Organ

*"Out from lands of Orient
Was the ass divinely sent.
Strong and very fair was he,
Bearing burdens gallantly."*

(H.C. Green, Trans.)

Dance For Organ was composed in November 1981, shortly after the completion of *Organ Book*. It is meant to be danced and has been choreographed. Appropriately, the material on which this piece is based is a one-voice estampie, a pair of two-voice ductiae and a popular song of the period called *Song of the Ass* (*Orientis Partibus*). The three thirteenth century dances are rewritten with minor alterations in counterpoint but major displacements in phrasing. Treated contrapuntally — there is a polyisorhythmic motet toward the middle of the piece as well as many canonic passages throughout — the dances are juxtaposed and transformed. Over all this is heard the *Song of the Ass* which comes from a liturgical play during which the Virgin Mary was shown riding on an ass into the cathedral. The song appears at the beginning of the piece and at the end, summing up a disjunct remembrance of things past.

Organ Book

Organum is the collective name for the various types of early polyphony, from about 800 to about 1200. The counterpoint in *Organ Book* evolves historically, from simple parallel motion in tritones to melismatic organum in every permissible interval and rhythm. The pedal-voice, which one first hears and which punctuates and underlies the movement, is essentially static as is the harmony which stays always within the mode (D-Eb-F-G#-A-B). At first one hears melismatic organum over a sustained bass (the cantus firmus in this piece is taken from an Eskimo lullabye). A discant section — note values doubled — twice interrupts the movement, which leads to a free organum working out of the material, cadencing on the note C (really a B#). The last section is a rhythmically augmented workingout of all the previous material using the full set of medieval rhythmic modes. Massive chords, full registration and deep pedal tones bring this section to a close. Part two is a canonic reworking of a Sicilian lullabye over a ground base; first in three voices with a canon at the octave and a mensuration canon in the bass, then, da-capo; with two more voices added. Part two is marked *dolce* with the tempo-marking *lento*.

Parts three and four are both canonic variations on *L'Homme Armé*. The four canons of part three are: 1) an inverted canon at the unison; 2) a crab canon over a ground bass; 3) a mensuration canon with the ratio 6 to 3 to 2 based on the one we heard by Josquin Des Prés; 4) another inverted canon at the unison over an ascending/descending bass.

Part four is in three sections, each is a division of the one that comes before it. Hence, section one is written in even quarters; section two in eights; section three in sixteenths. More than half a dozen canons are strung together in section one. They each have a different voicing, interval scheme and entrance layout. A few canons are double although all are four part. An energetic, cadenza-like pedal solo bridges sections one and two. The middle section consists of a three-voice mensuration canon with the ratio 3 to 2 to 1. This opens up into a chorale. Finally, the last section is a quasi-fantasia in which the material from the other sections is expanded by isorhythm, permutation and melisma. A long pedal point on D closes the work with a quasi-phrygian cadence resolving on a tierce de picardy.

Organ Book was written in the fall of 1981. It is dedicated to Bruce Posner.